



Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck

Liberal Senator for Tasmania



RC/dc

30 September 2009

The Hon. Mr Kevin Rudd MP
Prime Minister of Australia
Parliament House
CANBERRA TAS 2600

Dear Prime Minister,

I write to you to highlight the very desperate plight currently being experienced by dairy farmers in Tasmania, and to request your consideration of Federal Government financial assistance following an extreme weather event on Sunday, 27 September 2009.

Throughout winter, many parts of Tasmania have had rainfall well above the seasonal averages and as a result many dairy farmers have been struggling to manage stressed herds and properties flooded with excess water and mud.

At a time when they should have been allowed to focus on their animals and their properties, the dairy farmers have just recently been knocked for six by milk companies trying to pay per-litre milk prices that are well below the cost of production. This is placing incredible financial pressure on the dairy farmers, to the point of crisis here in Tasmania. As you may be aware, these pricing matters are now the subject of two Senate Inquiries, with hearings to start in Devonport, Tasmania, next week.

Unfortunately the situation for dairy farmers took another unpredictable turn for the worse on Sunday when storm force winds lashed Tasmania, particularly the North West region. As a result of these storms, power has been lost to thousands of homes and businesses, including a large number of dairy farms for several days.

The severity of these storms has placed unprecedented demand on the power supplier Aurora and it will still be a number of days before Aurora can restore power in a number of rural areas.

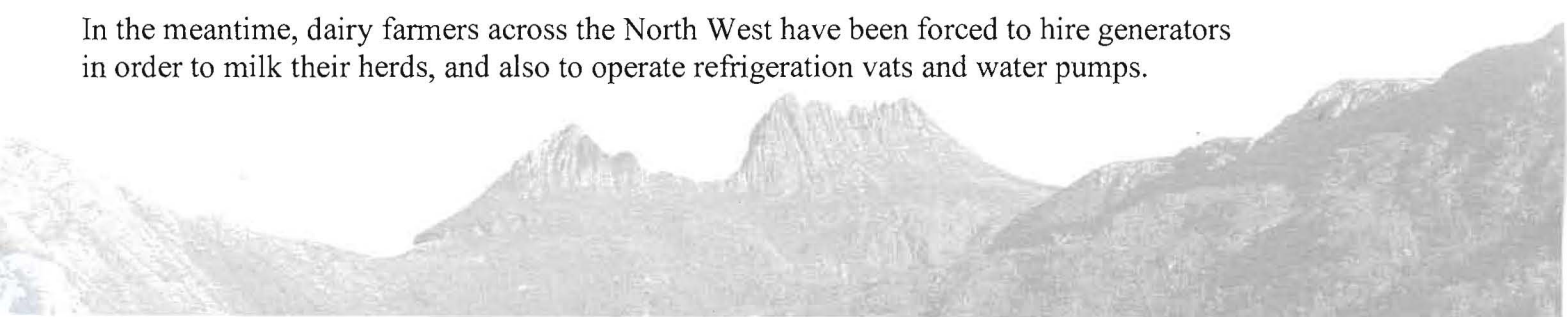
In the meantime, dairy farmers across the North West have been forced to hire generators in order to milk their herds, and also to operate refrigeration vats and water pumps.

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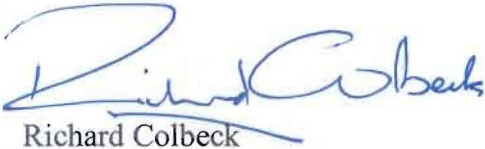
Prime Minister, I hope you can appreciate just how dire the situation is for these farmers, many of whom were already facing financial ruin as a result of the low milk price and unseasonal rains. As well as the financial burden, these farm families and their workforces are under extreme personal stress.

In these extreme circumstances, I urge you to consider using the Commonwealth's Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA) as a guide to providing Tasmania's stricken dairy farmers with financial assistance to offset the costs associated with operating their dairies during these unforeseen power outages.

I note the NDRRA includes a component for *"purchase or hire/lease costs for equipment essential to the immediate resumption of farming following a natural disaster."*

Prime Minister, this is a critical situation and I trust that you can give my request, on behalf of the dairy farmers, urgent consideration. I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely



Richard Colbeck

**Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Liberal Senator for Tasmania**

Cc: Premier of Tasmania, The Hon. David Bartlett MHA